

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GEORGE 01430 051217Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 1430

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (HABIB, PHILIP C.) GY
SUBJECT: GUYANESE REACTIONS TO UNDER SECRETARY HABIB'S
VISIT

REF: GEORGETOWN 1347

SUMMARY: THE VISIT OF UNDER SECRETARY HABIB LEFT A MARKEDLY
POSITIVE IMPRESSION IN GUYANA. FAVORABLE AND, ON THE GOG'S
PART, SELF-SERVING ATTENTION WAS FOCUSED ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS
ISSUE IN MEDIA COVERAGE, INCLUDING TWO FEATURE EDITORIALS.
PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM HAS PRASIED THE UNDER SECRETARY'S "CANDID,
DIRECT AND INTELLIGENT" APPROACH. EVEN GUYANESE WHO ARE NOT SUP-
PORTERS OF THE GOG HAVE EXPRESSED SATISFACTION AND RELIEF THAT US-
GUYANA RELATIONS APPEAR TO BE BACK ON TRACK. THE ONLY NEGATIVE
NOISES HAVE COME FROM THE MOSCOW-LINE PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY
AND A RADICAL SPLINTER GROUP WHICH HAVE CRITICIZED BOTH THE
GOG AND THE US. THE UNDER SECRETARY'S FIRM NEGATIVE RESPONSES
TO GOG OFFICIAL INQUIRIES ABOUT PROGRAM LOANS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN
RECEIVED WITH UNDERSTANDING. NO EXCESSIVE HOPES WERE STIMULATED;
HOWEVER, THE PROSPECTS FOR BILATERAL PROJECT ASSISTANCE,
PLUS EVIDENCE THAT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION
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PAGE 02 GEORGE 01430 051217Z

UNDERSTANDS AND SYMPATHIZES WITH GUYANA'S
DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS SHOULD STIMULATE
THE GOG TO WORK HARDER TO STRENGTHEN ITS TIES WITH THE US.
END SUMMARY.

1. UNDER SECRETARY HABIB'S VISIT REMAINS A TOPIC OF HIGHLY
FAVORABLE COMMENT IN GOG OFFICIAL CIRCLES AND AMONG GUYANESE

IN GENERAL. THE HIGH LEVEL ATTENTION FROM THE USG WAS APPRECIATED, AS WAS THE NEWS THAT THE US WOULD NAME AN AMBASSADOR SOON. EVEN CONSERVATIVE GUYANESE WHO ARE LESS THAN ENCHANTED WITH GOVERNMENT POLICIES HAVE EXPRESSED RELIEF THAT COMMUNICATION AND TIES WITH THE US HAVE STRENGTHENED.

2. DURING A PHONE CONVERSATION WITH THE CHARGE, AFTER THE UNDER SECRETARY'S VISIT, PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM SAID HE HAD APPRECIATED THE UNDER SECRETARY'S "DIRECT, CANDID, AND INTELLIGENT APPROACH" TO PROBLEMS AND THE ATTITUDE WHICH HE REFLECTED TOWARD GUYANA. HE ALSO COMMENTED THAT HE HOPED THAT THE IMPROVED RELATIONS WOULD ADVANCE THE INTERESTS OF BOTH OF OUR COUNTRIES--A HINT THAT HE HOPES FOR ASSISTANCE IN SOME FORM. FONMIN WILLS, WHO WAS NOT IN GUYANA FOR THE UNDER SECRETARY'S VISIT, TOLD ME JUNE 30 THAT BURNHAM WAS PLEASED WITH BOTH THE VISIT AND THE STEADY IMPROVEMENT IN GUYANA'S RELATIONS WITH THE US.

3. HUMAN RIGHTS, IMPROVEMENT OF US-GOG RELATIONS, AND THE TERMINATION OF TIMERHI AIRBASE AGREEMENT HAVE BEEN THE ASPECTS OF THE VISIT HIGHLIGHTED BY THE MEDIA. THE VISIT STIMULATED TWO EDITORIALS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE "GUYANA CHRONICLE." OTHER PRESS COMMENTARY FOCUSED ON THE UNDER SECRETARY'S ASSERTION THAT GUYANA HAD NO HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM AND HIS INVITATION TO GUYANA TO JOIN WITH THE US IN IMPROVING THE WORLDWIDE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION. ONE EDITORIAL, NOTING THAT

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 GEORGE 01430 051217Z

SOME CONFUSION AT THE OASGA OVER THE DEFINITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, CONCLUDED THAT HUMAN RIGHTS ULTIMATELY MEANT THE QUALITY OF JUSTICE. LOVE OF JUSTICE, THE EDITORIAL ASSERTED, WAS THE "ONLY REDEEMING POWER IN AN ABSURD WORLD."

4. THE UNDER SECRETARY'S FIRM NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO GUYANESE INQUIRIES ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF PROGRAM LOANS AND USG-BACKED CREDIT ARRANGEMENTS FOR 1977 GUYANESE IMPORTS FROM THE US APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED IN GOOD GRACE. THEY WERE PREPARED FOR NEGATIVE RESPONSES ON THESE REQUESTS. THEY ARE PLEASED OVER THE PROSPECT OF THE CONTINUATION OF THE BILATERAL PROJECT-ORIENTED ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, AND HOPE FOR US BACKING FOR GUYANA'S BIDS FOR LOANS FROM INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES INCLUDING THE IBRD, IADB, AND THE IMF, AND ANY OTHER ASSISTANCE THAT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE, INCLUDING PL480. ON THE LATTER THEY ARE AWARE OF THE PROBLEMS ARISING FROM THE FACT THAT GUYANA IS NOT AMONG THE POOREST COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD.

5. THE GOG-OWNED PRESS CREDITED THE GOVERNMENT'S CONSISTENT ANTI-IMPERIALIST POLICY WITH HAVING OBTAINED TERMINATION OF THE TIMERHI BASE AGREEMENT. THE OPPOSITION PRESS, HOWEVER, CLAIMED THAT THE PEOPLES PROGRESSIVE PARTY'S (PPP) UNRELENTING

CRITICISM HAD FORCED THE GOG INTO SEEKING THE TERMINATION OF THE AGREEMENT. ANOTHER OPPOSITION GROUP, THE WORKING PEOPLES VANGUARD PARTY (WPVP), IN ITS NEWSHEET OF JUNE 26 LABELED THE UNDER SECRETARY'S VISIT AS "PATER-NALISTIC" AND AN "INSPECTION TOUR." THE WPVP'S NEWSHEET OF JUNE 19 CLAIMED THAT A TUG-O-WAR WAS UNDERWAY BETWEEN THE US AND THE USSR FOR DOMINANCE IN GUYANA.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH EDITORIALS IN THE GOG-OWNED PRESS AND OTHER COVERAGE ON HUMAN RIGHTS WERE SELF-SERVING, THE UNDER SECRETARY'S VISIT AND STATEMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE EDITORIALS HAVE FOCUSED OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC ATTENTION ON THE ISSUE AND PROVIDED AN ISSUE ON WHICH THEY CAN IDENTIFY WITH US. THE UNDER SECRETARY'S VISIT HAS THUS PREPARED THE WAY FOR

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 GEORGE 01430 051217Z

POTENTIAL GOG SUPPORT OF US HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVES IN INTERNATIONAL FORA.

7. WE CAN EXPECT THE LEFTIST OPPOSITION GROUPS TO CIRITICIZE THE GOG AND THE US MORE STRIDENTLY AS US-GUYANA RELATIONS CONTINUE TO IMPROVE. THE PPP, WHICH HAD BEEN TRYING TO MAKE A CASE AGAINST THE GOG USING THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE (ALLEGING ELECTION FRAUD) DID NOT LIKE THE PRAISE OF GUYANA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD.

8. THE UNDER SECRETARY'S NEGATIVE ANSWERS CONCERNING LARGE SCALE US PROGRAM LOAN ASSISTANCE BALANCED OFF BY THE SYMPATHETIC AND UNDERSTANDING ATTITUDE HE DISPLAYED TOWARD GUYANA'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, ASPIRATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND THE PROSPECTS FOR BILATERAL AID, STRUCK JUST THE RIGHT NOTE. NO EXCESSIVE EXPECTATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE WERE STIMULATED, YET THE USG HAS INDICATED THAT SOME ASSISTANCE WILL BE FORTHCOMING AND THE UNDER SECRETARY UNMISTAKABLY SIGNED THE INTEREST OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION IN THE REGION.

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